OUR HOME & NATIVE

Reginald Fessenden

# Radio pioneer

Many scientists were able to transmit radio signals over distances at the turn of the twentieth century, including Italy's Gugliermo Marconi, who is renowned for his transatlantic telegraph transmissions to and from Canada's East Coast. But it was Canadian Reginald Fessenden who developed the ability to transmit sounds like voices and music via radio waves.

Born in 1866 in East Bolton, Quebec, Fessenden was a gifted math student. He taught younger students while studying at Bishop's University in Sherbrooke as a teenager, but left university without a degree at age eighteen. Two years later, he went to America and worked for his idol, Thomas Edison.

After holding positions with manufacturers and universities, Fessenden secured a contract to help the U.S. Weather Bureau develop a radio system. It was there that he began his advances in receiver design and made what is believed to have been the first audio radio transmission, in 1900.

With help from investors, Fessenden worked in Brant Rock, Massachusetts, to develop the advanced transmitters he used in the first two-way transatlantic radio transmissions and in the first broadcast of music and entertainment — a Christmas Eve concert to ships at sea. Fessenden received numerous awards and hundreds of technology patents before he died in 1932.

— **Danielle Conolly**

CORBIS

# Riding to the rescue

Sable Island is famous for its hardy herd of wild ponies. Introduced to the island in 1738, the horses faced extinction on several occasions. The Diefenbaker government actually considered culling the animals in the 1960s, a plan that was halted by an impromptu letter-writing campaign on the part of Canadian schoolchildren.

Now the horses may get permanent protection thanks to a federal-provincial plan to designate Sable Island a national park.

Sable Island is a windswept spit of sand and grass located about 290 kilometres southeast of Halifax. Roughly forty-one kilometres long and just one-and-a-half kilometres wide, it is home to between 150 and 400 wild horses.

The federal government is considering two ways of making the island a national park — through either the Canada National Parks Act or the Canadian Wildlife Act.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans currently administers the island, while Environment Canada maintains a year-round weather station there.

— **Mark Reid**

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# TAKE THE DAY OFF

**June 1**

To observe the day in 1951 when the Massey Commission tabled its report on national cultural policy. Wear your heart on your sleeve.

**June 3**

To remember the day in 1788 when Alexander Mackenzie set out from Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabaska in search of a route to the West Coast. Check your bearings.